

REMARKS

Claims 1-10 are the claims currently pending in the Application.

Claims 3 and 8 are amended to clarify features recited thereby.

Acknowledgment of Priority

Applicant again respectfully requests that the Examiner acknowledge the claim for foreign priority as well as the receipt of the priority document.

Acknowledgment of References Cited in Information Disclosure Statement

The Examiner is again respectfully requested to acknowledge review and consideration of the references cited in the Information Disclosure Statement filed on October 13, 2004.

Claim Objections

Claim 3 is objected to because of an informality, and claim 8 is objected to because of an allegedly improper multiple dependency.

No amendment is believed to be required as a matter of applicable law and regulation. However, in the interest of expediting prosecution of the present Application, claims 3 and 8 are amended.

Rejection of Claims 1-10 under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Picoult et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,801,932.¹ This rejection is traversed.

The application for the Picoult patent was filed on November 7th, 2000. The present Application claims priority from July 5th, 2000, when Japanese Patent Application 2000/204113 was filed. Therefore, the Japanese priority application antedates the Picoult reference.

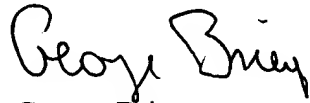
Filed herewith is a certified English-language translation of Japanese Patent Application 2000/204113. Accordingly, priority of the present Application over the cited Picoult reference is hereby perfected. Therefore, the Picoult reference should be removed as a reference against the present Application, and this rejection should be withdrawn at this time.

For at least the reasons set forth in the foregoing discussion, Applicant believes that the Application is now allowable, and respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider the rejections and allow the Application. Should the Examiner have

¹ The Office Action on page 6 appears to cite the Nishino reference against claim 6, however, this seems to be an error because this is the only mention of Nishino in this Office Action and because the reference numerals of Figures 4 and 5 cited on page 7 of the Office Action are consistent with figures of Picoult but inconsistent with figures of Nishino. Therefore, claim 6 also seems to have been rejected over the Picoult reference.

any questions regarding this Amendment, or regarding the Application generally, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George Brieger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "George" and last name "Brieger" clearly distinguishable.

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